

Integration of Speech Clarity Techniques into the School Setting  
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**\*\*\*There are many parents who ask me about incorporating Oral Placement techniques into their child's school day. This is very possible and does not need to be burdensome or even written into the IEP. Anyone can learn OPT techniques and incorporating a couple techniques into your child's school day can benefit your child greatly. Generally the training is either in person or through video clips. Any person who is consistently working with your child can participate (1:1 aide, SLP, OT, teacher, PT). If you want further information please contact Heather Peterson, [heather@happykidstherapy.com](mailto:heather@happykidstherapy.com) for more information.**

This past September I had the pleasure of meeting 12 bay area school-based speech pathologists who came to learn about "Speech Clarity in the Down Syndrome Population". We had a variety of school districts and age ranges represented. It was an incredible collaboration, where knowledge was transmitted, ideas exchanged and a huge step in the right direction for inclusion of Oral Placement Therapy (OPT) strategies into the school setting.

Components of the talk were: A) How strength/stability/tone affect speech intelligibility, B) demonstration of therapy techniques, C) IEP goal writing, D) discussion of specific cases. The therapists reported learning the following key points from the talk: the importance of jaw stability in speech clarity; most children with Down syndrome have dysarthria and some also have Apraxia of speech; muscle tone is innate and cannot be changed but stability and muscle strength can be; feeding strategies can be very important therapy techniques for speech clarity development, and demonstration of tools and therapy techniques to help place specific sounds.

I am truly thankful for the Down Syndrome Education Alliance for making this dissemination of information possible. The past 6 years practicing at the Connection has confirmed one of my professional goals as being outreach and education to bay area professionals (educational/medical/dental). My hope is that through grant funded programs like the Down Syndrome Education Alliance that the spreading of effective therapeutic techniques like OPT will affect hundreds of bay area children and families. My hope is for improved speech clarity for all.

As time has passed since the talk, many therapists continue to email, come in for training with specific students, and request information and further training. If you are interested in holding a talk for your area please contact: Nancy Ferguson - [nferguson@dsconnection.org](mailto:nferguson@dsconnection.org). If you are interested in learning more about how OPT can be integrated into your school environment, please feel free to contact me: [heather@happykidstherapy.com](mailto:heather@happykidstherapy.com).